

Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

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THE ENGLISH VILLAGE CHURCH

· EXTERIORS and INTERIORS ·

ය ALFRED MOPKINS

112 PLATES





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T was during a recent trip through Oxfordshire, not in the fast going motor car, but on a bicycle, which method of transportation the author heartily commends to every lover of rural England, that he saw a very few of the village churches of that important county. He was so attracted by their almost invariably beautiful setting and their great variety of architectural expression that he set about to find a more competent photographer than himself and was directed to the interesting workshop of Mr. H. W. Taunt on the Cowley Road just outside of Oxford. Mr. Taunt, who has taken some five thousand pictures of English village architecture, from which these plates have been selected, knows every nook and corner of his beloved Oxon. He is no mean antiquarian and a delightful enthusiast over every subject of his work and I recall that during the selection I was making of the following plates, he put before me a photograph of a church with a beautiful east window, drawing my attention to its detail and its graceful proportion.

"Yes," I replied, "but the tower and transept are bad."

"Ah!" quoth he, "but you must not expect to find *everything* in one church." And the rebuke was a just one; and it is in this friendly appreciation of every part of the village church that the selection of subjects has been made and not by any means with the idea of presenting in each case a perfect ensemble. While many are perfection, yet others were chosen for any bit of outline or proportion or arrangement which seemed agreeable or suggestive.

Even the casual observer who spends a holiday in the English country must be impressed with the number and excellence of these small churches, and every one is so rich with ancient history that it makes its appeal quite as strongly to the stranger as to those who have grown up under its benign influence. To the practical and to the sometimes unpoetical American mind may come the casual query as to why there are so many of them and how the smallest hamlet could afford to spend so much money on a seemingly large and expensive building. The answer is primarily because of the real need of the church not only in the spiritual but in the practical life of the community.

During the middle ages, the parish church was not only the center of those religious devotions for which it was consecrated, but it led also the community life in its various aspects. It served the purpose now supplied by the Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2010 with funding from University of Toronto

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church institute, the community house and even the club room itself. The holding of fairs and the sale of merchandise within, or around churchyards, occasionally encroached on the porches of the very building itself and while such proceedings were deemed improper by ecclesiastical pronouncement, yet the church was the influence which dominated to a great degree the playing and the bargaining of the parishioners. In certain churches dancing in the nave undoubtedly took place at rare festival seasons and in the troublous times or when fires occurred, the parishioners were allowed to store wool and grain or chests of valuables and even household goods within the church, paying, of course, a small amount for the privilege. The church sometimes became the place of safety for valuable papers and records or deeds, these being stored in the strong chest, and in those fierce days when limbs were lopped off and life taken for comparatively trivial offences by a cruelly severe state, the church on the contrary bore perpetual witness to the spirit of mercy by insisting on all her consecrated churches and churchyards being regarded as hallowed ground and a safe sanctuary, under defined limits, for all wrong-doers, and Doctor Cox in his very interesting and instructive book, "The English Parish Church," from which the above is paraphrased, goes on to say, "there was probably not a single parish church in the whole length and breadth of England which has not exercised at some time or another in its history, the privilege of sheltering a fugitive and in eventually substituting banishment from the realm in the place of loss of life or limb."

From the foregoing very brief outline, it will be seen why it was that the village church was the pre-eminent influence in every community, why it was beloved by all, reverenced by all and supported by all. That this early affection and devotion to a religious idea shou'd change with time and alter with circumstances, anyone with small knowledge of history and human nature will readily understand, but fortunately for those who are interested in building, a great quantity of these ancient fabrics remain, delightful examples and ingratiating histories of an early day. Nor can anyone interested in architectural design look at these little buildings without being conscious of the straightforward, earnest artistry which produced them. They ought to be seen with the loving eye through which a connoiseur regards a perfect piece of old furniture. Many have been hurt by improper restorations and additions of a less appre-



ciative age, but they all teach a lesson of sincerity of purpose which the modern architect will learn, only if he goes about his latter day problem in the same simple, unaffected way and forgetting in a great measure the tiresome technique of our modern fashion of doing things. The mathematical perfection of construction, which we deem so important now, seldom existed in the early days, and it is in the settling of uneven loads and in the tireless thrusts of the stone vault or arch on inadequate supports that soften the rigid straight line and the flat masonry plane into the modelled and flowing surface which is so delightful a quality in the old work. Mathematical precision has at the best only a limited artistic value.

With respect to their plans, the simplest form was that of the nave and chancel with the north door opening directly into the former. Perhaps the next step at enlargement and embellishment was the south porch, then the westerly tower. Then the nave was given a single side aisle, the most interesting type of all for the village church because of its delightful variety, in that the arches between the nave and side aisle are thrown into greater prominence and effectiveness by not being duplicated on the opposite side. Then with the cruciform plan and the central tower it is only a few steps onward into the scheme of the great cathedral, but even they — though they surpass in size, in grandeur and in the technical knowledge of building the smaller structure—do not dim its lustre as a work of art and a sincere solution of a beautiful architectural problem.

What for instance could be a more fascinating type than the little Gothic church shown at Ampney (Plate 3). The belfry or bell-cote is hardly larger in size than a chimney yet it comes in exactly the right place and adds interest to the whole composition. Similar, though perhaps not quite so suggestive, is the church at Binsey (Plate 11), which is likewise a perfect specimen and the designer must not overlook its protecting and enclosing church yard wall, which is a real and a frequent embellishment of the English village church. At Kelmscot (Plate 64), we have to the simple nave and chancel the addition of a transept and here is found the compelling charm of the high proportion for the little building and the effectiveness of the simplest possible detail. The grouping is also excellent and the belfry again, a happy point of interest. The simplicity of the three lighted window in the chancel should not be overlooked

and it is just this naive rural way of attending to detail which is the chief charm of the beautiful works of art we have under consideration.

At Bascot (Plate 6), the fine old roofs have just the quality of color and texture which every American architect would like to get into his own work. It cannot be done, unfortunately, for no art, however subtle, can reproduce the softening influence of time, stretched over a period of centuries. Though the roofs are old, the stucco on the side walls is quite new but well done, showing what an excellent surfacing medium this is. The south porch is in good scale though the tower would be improved by being larger, but perhaps a camera with a wide angle lense is responsible for this disproportion. At Northmoor (Plate 86), we have one of the simplest as well as one of the most satisfactory of all our examples of the pleasant art of church-building, an art long since laid to rest with the old builders some of whose work we have been enjoying. At Upper Swell (Plate 101), we have a charming church of the simple type of nave and chancel, the former embellished with a beautiful perpendicular window of a later period which comes out with fine effect, the south porch here is in an excellent scale and lends dignity and interest to the whole structure.

These little buildings are not only beautiful on the outside but on the inside as well. In the interior of Coln Roger (Plate 33), nothing could be simpler than the wall surfaces made effective by the deep reveals of the windows. The disposition of the American designer has been to reverse this system and to emphasive the thickness of the walls of his structure from the outside. This, however, is a mistake and the method shown here is by all odds the better method. We find a beautiful interior in Sunningwell (Plate 98), beautiful in its design, beautiful in its texture and beautiful in its lighting. Not the least effective points of interest are the pews, though many if not most are new. They have, however, been well restored, and the old form of the pew end is the designer's only attempt at elaboration though we advise caution and a reduction in scale in any attempt to reproduce it. What would seem to be a delightful fragment in a telling setting is the little chapel at Water Eaton (Plate 105), but it makes up into a delightful village church. The simplicity of the planting is commended and we cannot point out too forcib'y the great necessity of this kind of embellishment, for Nature will always adorn the masonry wall in her own manner

and more effectively than the architect of today is able to do in his. At Kingsey (Plate 67), we give the only classical building in our selection, but it is a dignified and reposeful structure and shows what may be done in the simplest classical vocabulary. At Castle Eaton (Plate 20), is a much restored edifice which perhaps is the reason that it is lacking in the embellishment of ivy and yew, which one is accustomed to see growing vigorously in the village churchyard. This building also suffers from the agonizing restoration of the ridge, a ghastly way to treat the beautiful old stone slate carefully graduated in the thoughtful way of the period. If the old roof leaked, and not unlikely, a lead ridge would have been a better way to overcome the difficulty.

At Daglingworth (Plate 37), it will be noted that the path to the church door is not a straight one, nor does it come at right angles to the building and we would like to point out that in every instance, the walk to the church door takes this general direction and it is this simple way of accomplishing the necessary thing without affectation or ostentation which gives to these little buildings their potent charm. And at Shipton (Plate 90), where we find a beautiful setting and a fine structure, the designer did not feel the necessity of putting his building parallel to its street, to the great advantage of both.

At Kidlington (Plate 66), we have a fine proportioned interior with an excellent ceiling, one which is easily and, we trust, may be successfully copied, as well as the excellent plaster work of the walls, which has just the right roughness. Note also that the chancel arch does not come in the center of the nave. And at Kelmscot we have the interior of the beautiful church shown in Plate 63, though we resent, somewhat, the intrusion of the short marble shafts under the clear story arches, or perhaps the simulation which makes them appear to be marble. The mason's whitewash brush which has done such good service on the walls could be used to excellent advantage in this difficulty.

We could not resist the temptation of publishing the well-known and beautiful church at Iffley (Plate 59). Though charming in its type and antiquity, it is no more attractive than many others here shown, though they are less celebrated in the histories and text books of architecture. The interior plate is perhaps the most attractive and here the sturdy masonry walls are felt in all their primitive force and charm.

At Hampton (Plate 52), we have a perfect church in a perfect setting. One of the many examples which the lovely English country-side furnishes to the traveler almost at every turn. Here we have the level lines of the nave and chancel broken by the beautiful tower. Note well the simple windows and the fine wall space which their narrow compass yields. The excellent tower does not seem to need the pinnacles at the four corners, but the church is a masterpiece and its setting is perfect.

In St. Peters-in-the-East (Plate 97), we have an interesting structure which like the old parson's egg is quite good in parts. It would seem as if one path might be made sufficient but the two certainly emphasize the point already noticed, that the walk leading up to the village church is never at right angles to the building itself, nor is it ever carried out in the modern manner which frequently leads to commonplace results.

At Farmington (Plate 42), we have a useful and a very satisfactory type of design, encompassed by the ever satisfactory church yard wall, and at Ducklington (Plate 38), is seen a cramped location for the little building, but none the less interesting on that account and it does not take much imagination to construct the pleasant village streets, whose cross roads are indicated in the foreground. At Chedworth (Plate 26), is perhaps the most ambitious church of the series. It has a fascinating location on high ground where the broad walk leading up to the south porch is an effective feature. The exterior suffers more from the hand of the restorer than the interior, and here we see again the pleasing variety of the single aisle church and the fine effect of the long narrow nave. A pleasant study may be found in the varying height of the south windows and it would seem as if the short ones coming over the porch were the better. Letting the light in near the ceiling and illuminating the clear story wall from above is always effective.

Another most attractive interior of a single aisled church is that of Black Bourton (Plate 12), and although it has been much restored it is well done and the proportions are beautiful and the texture of the end wall is excellent. At Bidford (Plate 10), we have the perfect location and in quite a different though quite as delightful a spot is the beautiful church at Bampton (Plate 5).

As will be noted, our views are those which show the general mass and scheme of the village church, but we could not, however, resist the temptation

of showing the beautiful detail of the church at Abingdon (Plate 1). Here is perfect stone work and design. It is only the Master who can do things like this, so let the tyro beware. A church which is interesting in the way it adopts itself to the contours may be seen at Aldsworth (Plate 2), and the architect of today does not realize how great a variety he can give to his work, if he will only build to the land and not make the land conform to his building. He is too prone to first construct a plateau and then start his work upon it. Here is an instance where the architect has not troubled nature by changing her contours, and his composition has been greatly benefited thereby.

Though we have already been led to a further consideration of the individual plate than we intended, we cannot refrain from a closing paragraph on the beautiful church at Chesterton (Plate 28), a structure with low, reposeful outline in a perfect setting. This church shows perhaps more than any other how much architectural effect may be obtained by the simplest means, and under its influence of quiet and repose it is easy to project the mind backward to the early days of religious enthusiasm, when life was less complex than now and to realize that what the church stood for became then, in a more encompassing and absorbing manner than now, the veritable hope of the world, and to understand why it was that the structures which were erected as a consequence of that hope, should be the beautiful and incomparable examples of church building which we find them.

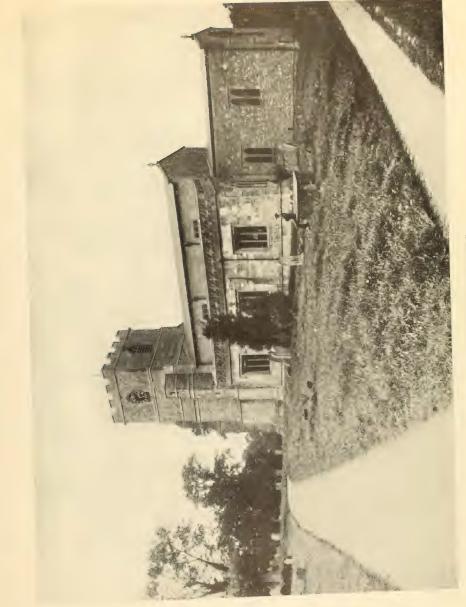
LIST OF PLATES

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66	5	Bampton,	Oxfordshire	
**	6	Bascot,	Berkshire	
4.6	7	Berrick Salome,	Oxfordshire	Interior
66	8	Bibury,	Gloucestershire	
66	9	Bicester,	Oxfordshire	
66	10	Bidford,	Warwickshire	
**	11	Binsey,	Oxfordshire	
66	12	Black Bourton,	Oxfordshire	Interior
44	13	Bledlon,	Buckinghamshire	Interior
44	14	Blockley,	Worcestershire	
66	15	Broadway Wore,	Oxfordshire	
6.6	16	Broadwell,	Gloucestershire	
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**	58	Ickford,	Buckinghamshire	Interior
**	59	Iffley,	Oxfordshire	
64	60	Iffley,	Oxfordshire	Interior

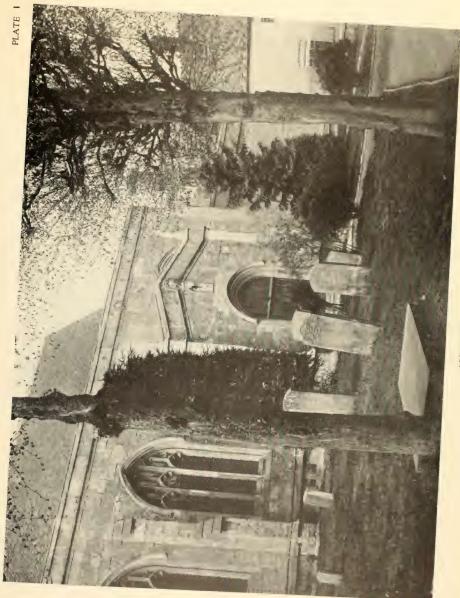
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« (63	Kelmscot,	Oxfordshire	
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44	94	South Stoke,	Oxfordshire,	
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66	108	Wiggington,	Oxfordshire,	
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**	110	Withington,	Gloucestershire	
**	111	Withington,	Gloucestershire	Interior
66	112	Wolvercot,	Oxfordshire,	



FRONTISPIECE

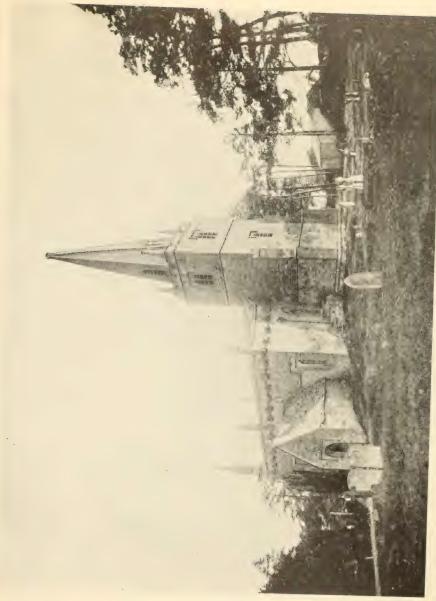


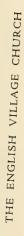


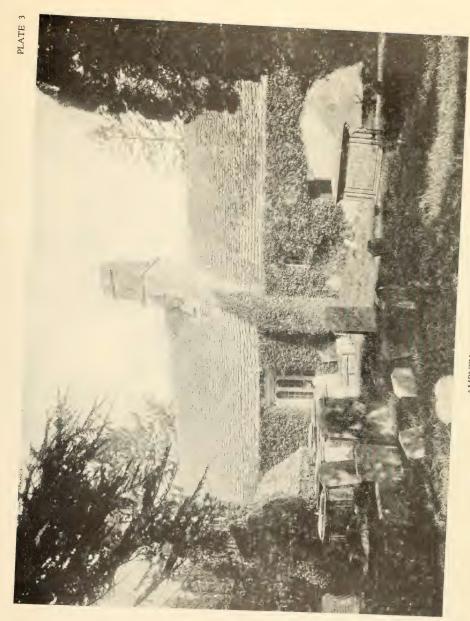


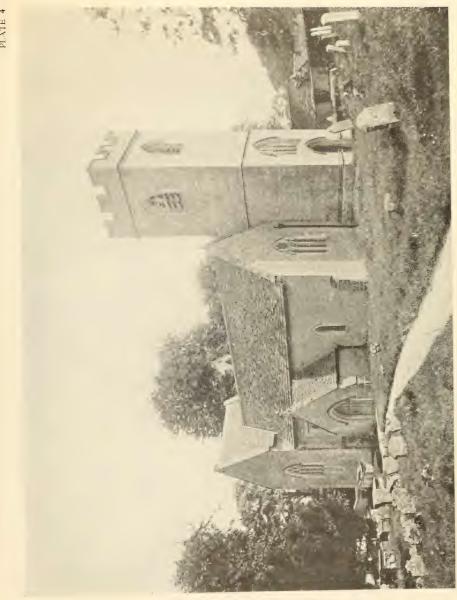
THE ENGLISH VILLAGE CHURCH

PLATE 2



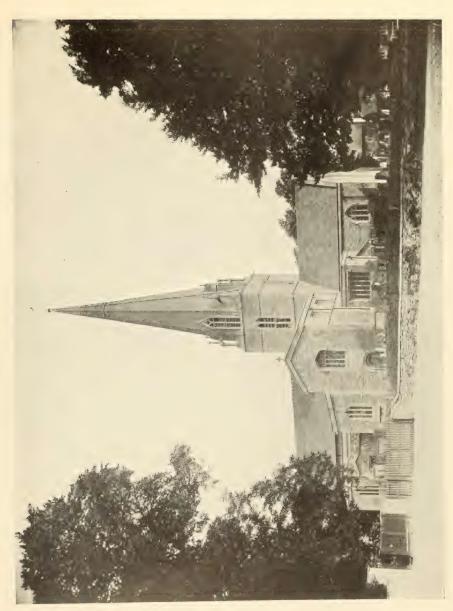




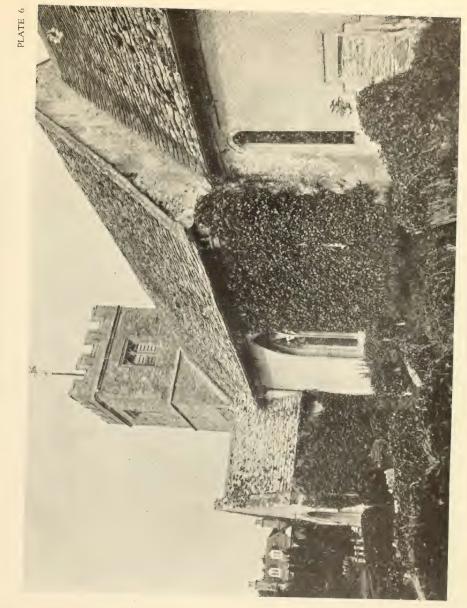


ASTHALL, UXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 5



BAMPTON, OXFORDSHIRE



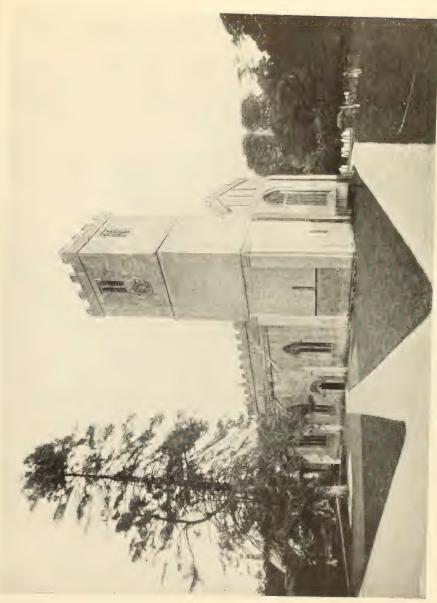




BERRICK SALOME, OXFORDSHIRE

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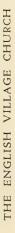


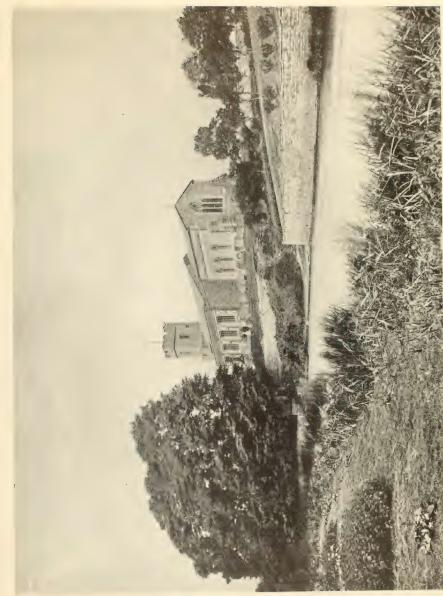


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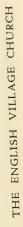




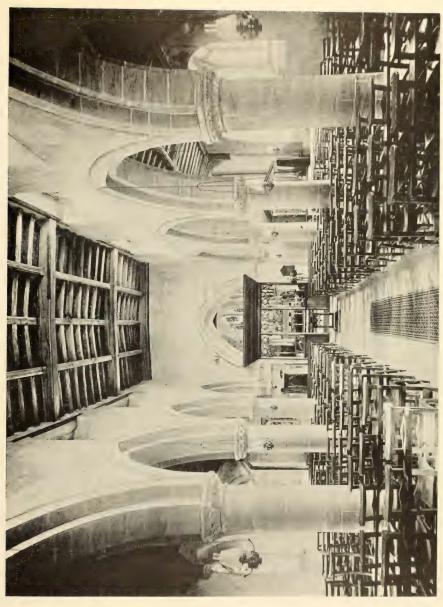
PLATE 12



BLACK BOURTON, OXFORDSHIRE



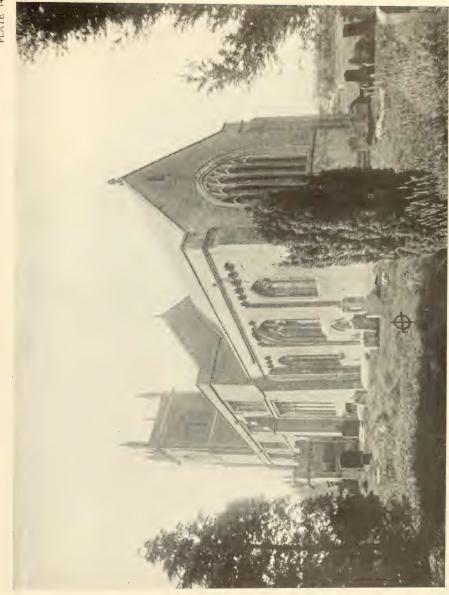
PLATE 13

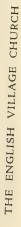


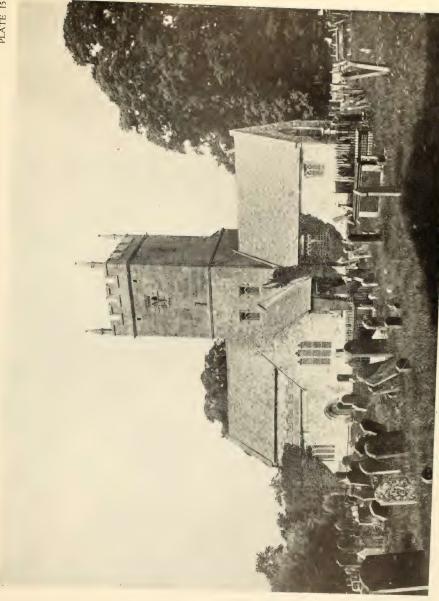
BLEDLON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE











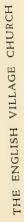
BROADWAY WORE, OXFORDSHIRE





BROADWELL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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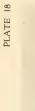




BROADWELL, OXFORDSHIRE







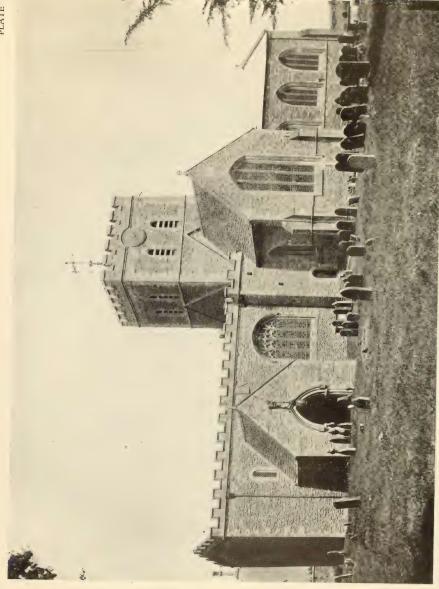
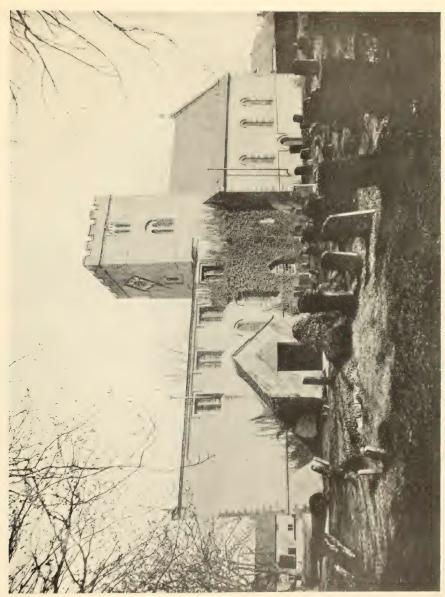
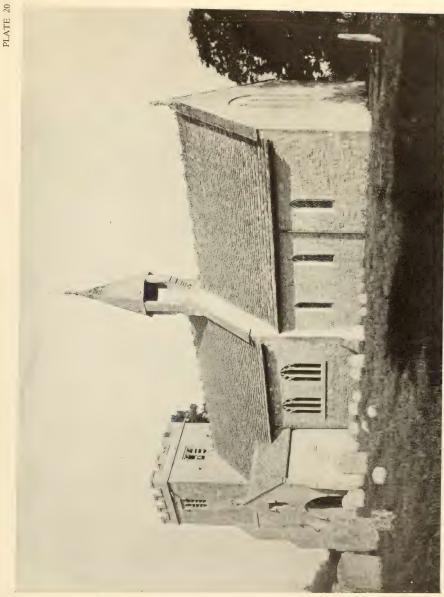




PLATE '9



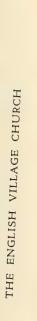


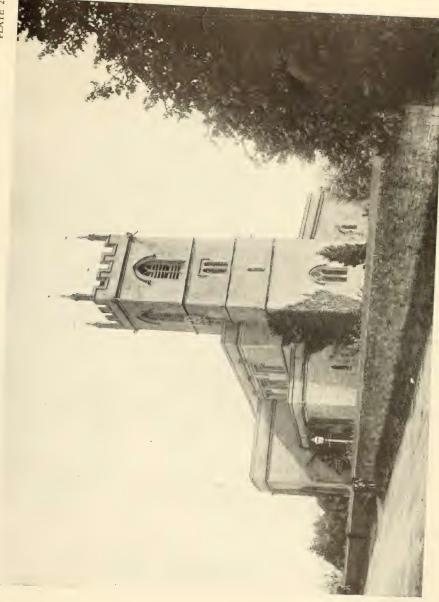
CASTLE EATON, WILTSHIRE

PLATE 21



CASTLE EATON, WILTSHIRE



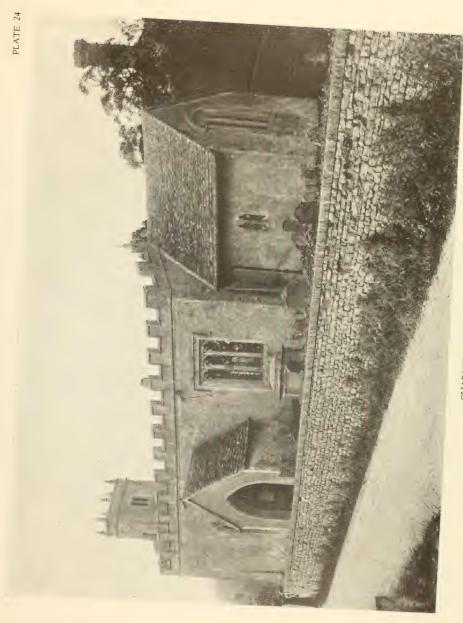






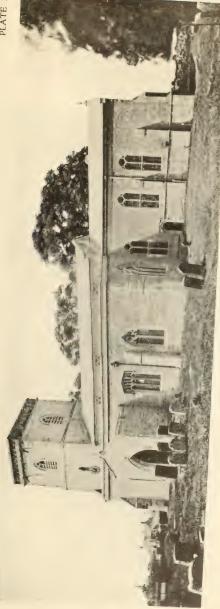






CHARNEY BASSETT, BERKSHIRE

PLATE 25



MERTON, OXFORDSHIRE





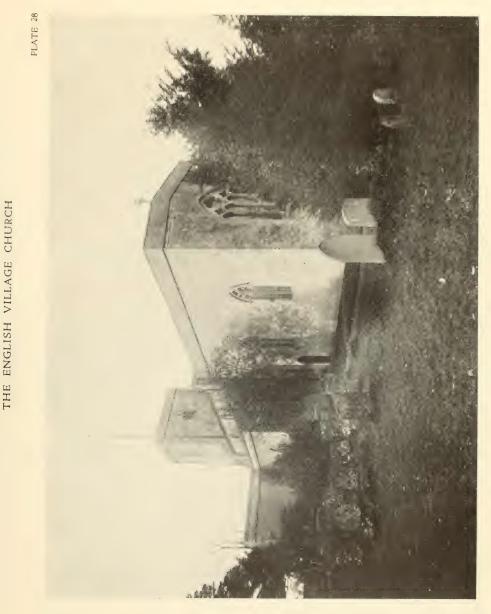
CHEDWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 27



CHEDWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE



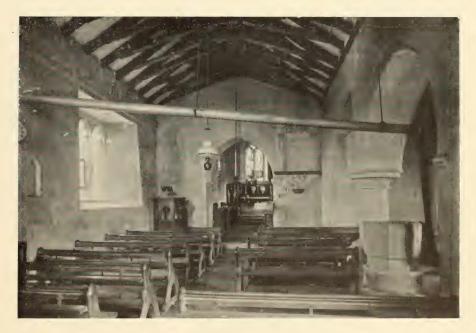


CHESTERTON, OXFORDSHIRE



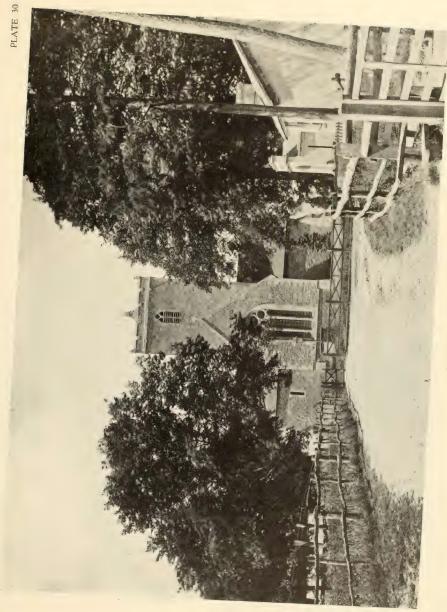


NUNEHAM MURREN, OXFORDSHIRE

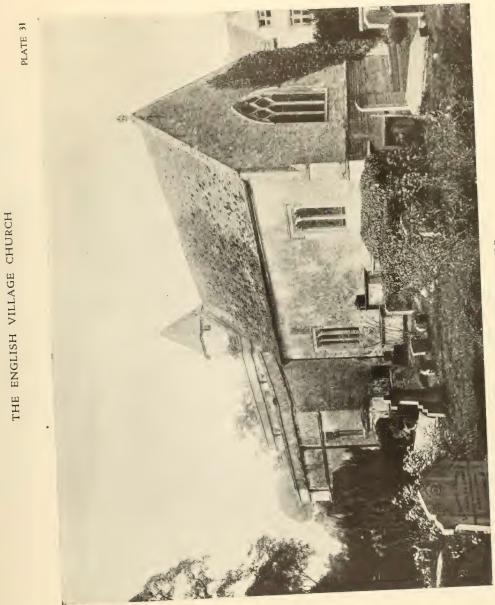


CHILTON, BERKSHIRE





CHOLSEY, BERKSHIRE



COGGS, OXFORDSHIRE

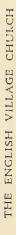
PLATE 32 1 15.331

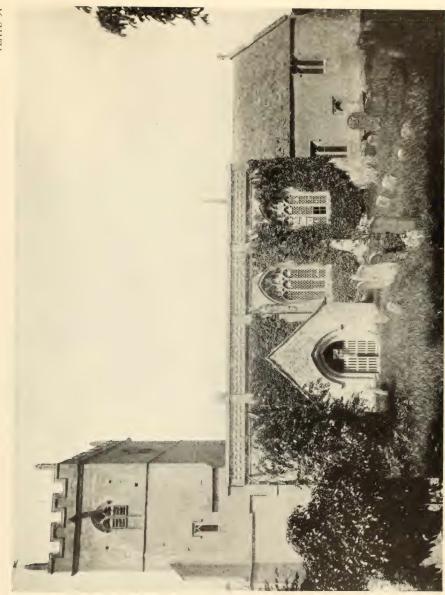
THE ENGLISH VILLAGE CHURCH

COLESHILL, BERKSHIRE



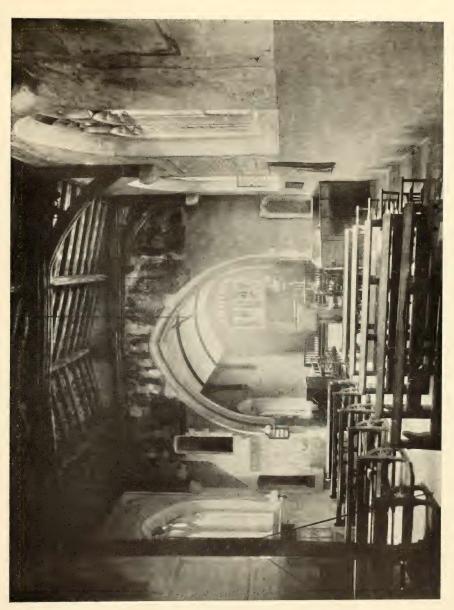
COLN ROGER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE





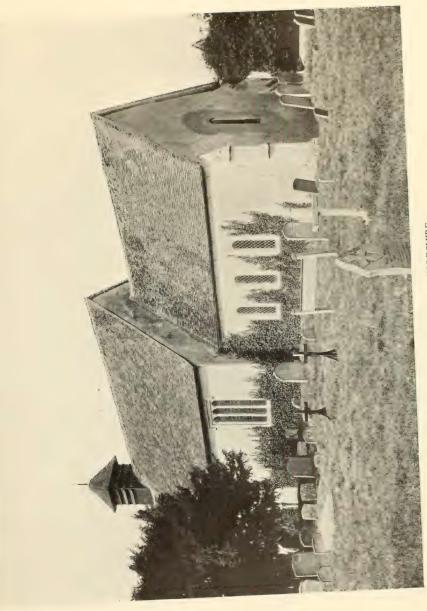
COOMBE, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 35

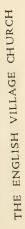


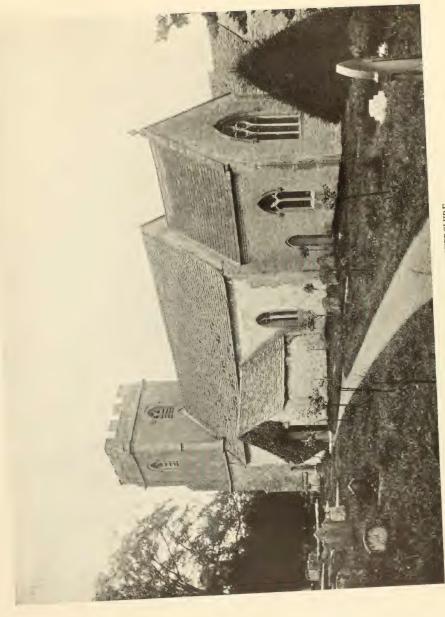
COOMBE, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 36

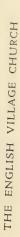


CROW MARSH, OXFORDSHIRE





DAGLINGWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE



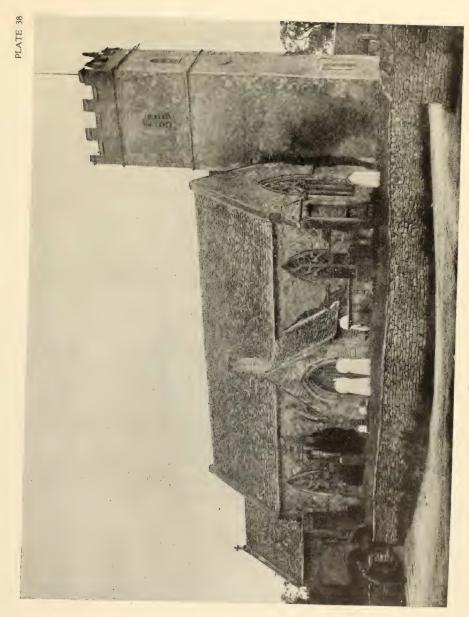
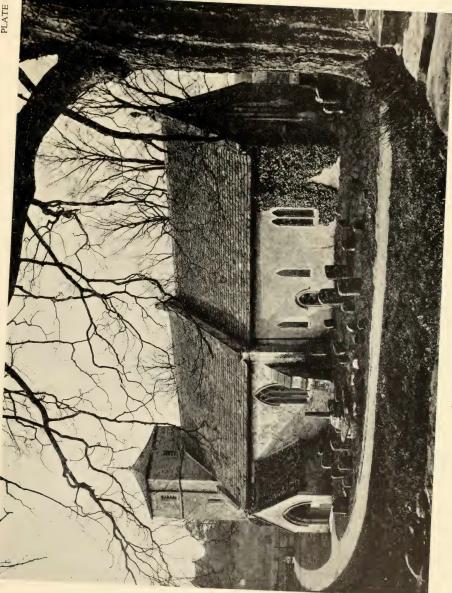


PLATE 39



EAST HAGBOURNE, BERKSHIRE





EAST LEACH MARTINE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE



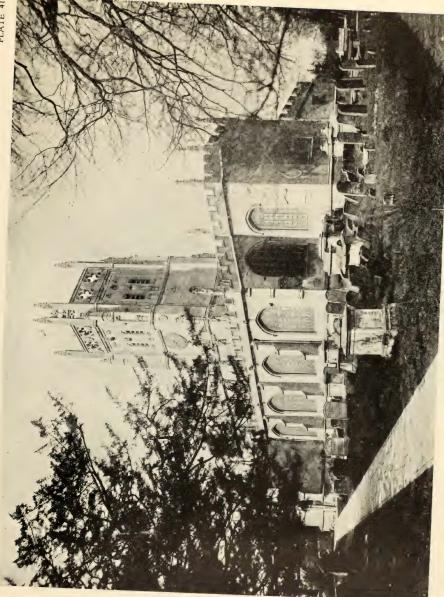
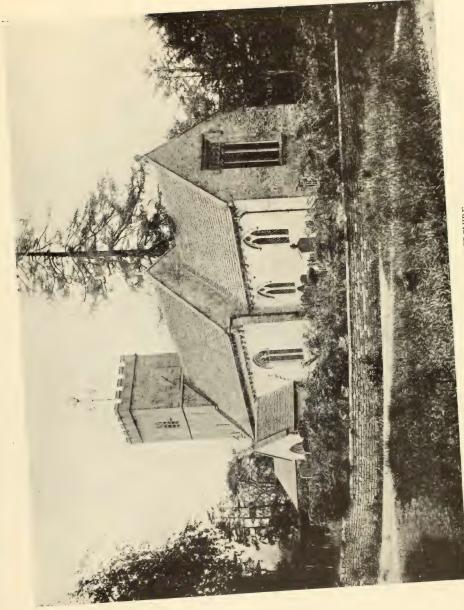
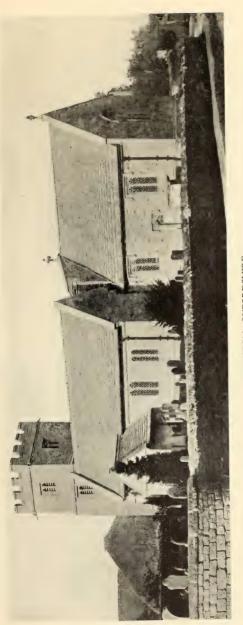


PLATE 42

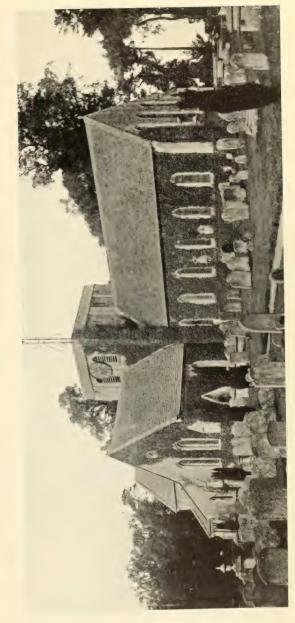


FARMINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 43

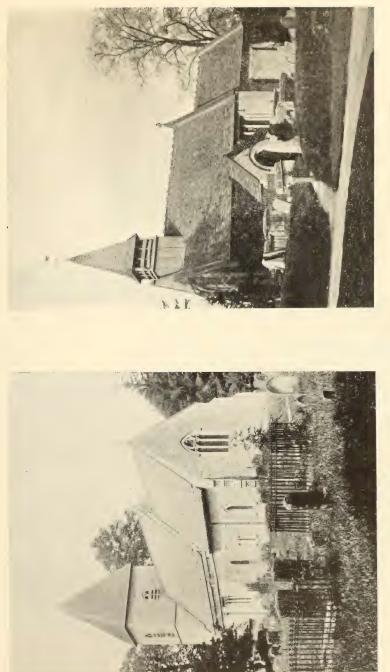


MARSTON, OXFORDSHIRE



FARINGDON, BERKSHIRE

PLATE 44



FRITWELL, OXFORDSHIRE

WESTWELL, OXFORDSHIRE

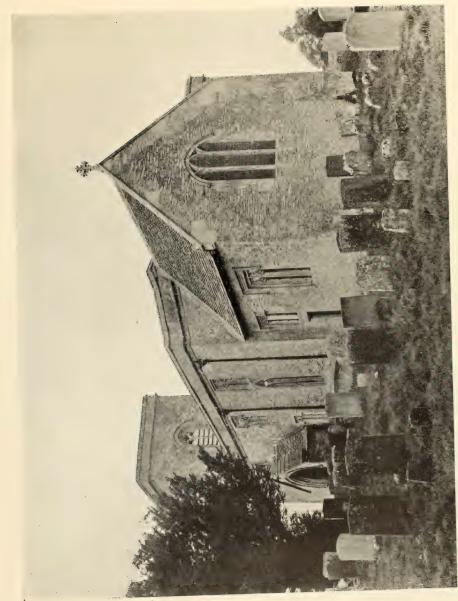
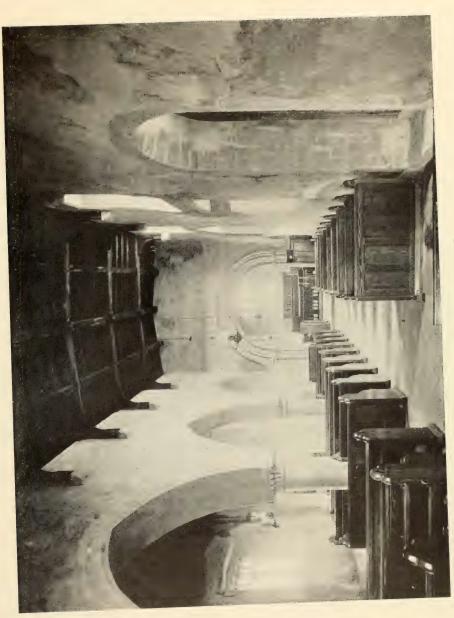


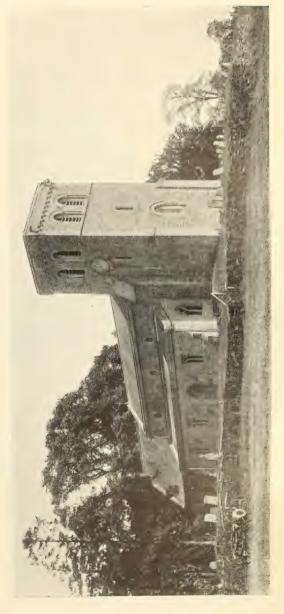
PLATE 46

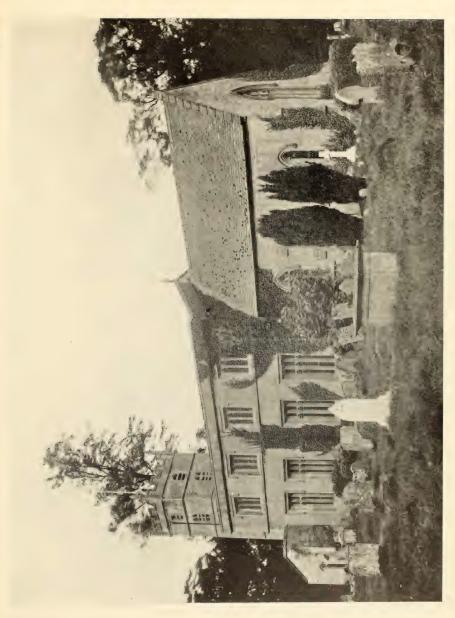


FULBROOK, OXFORDSHIRE



WATERSTOCK, OXFORDSHIRE





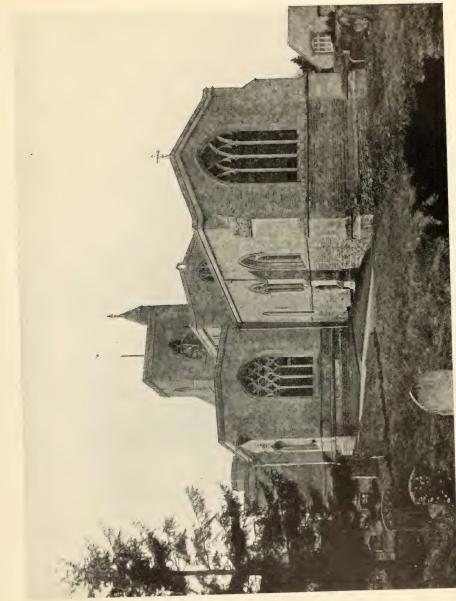


GREAT HAMPDEN, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



WANBOROUGH, BERKSHIRE

PLATE 50

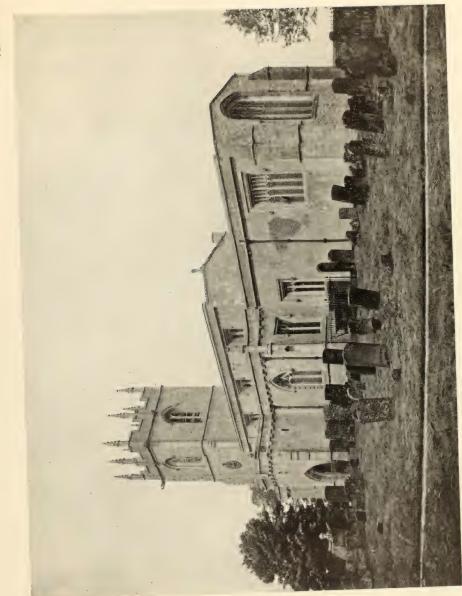


GREAT MILTON, OXFORDSHIRE

4 4 a sime that the 4 - 8 - 8

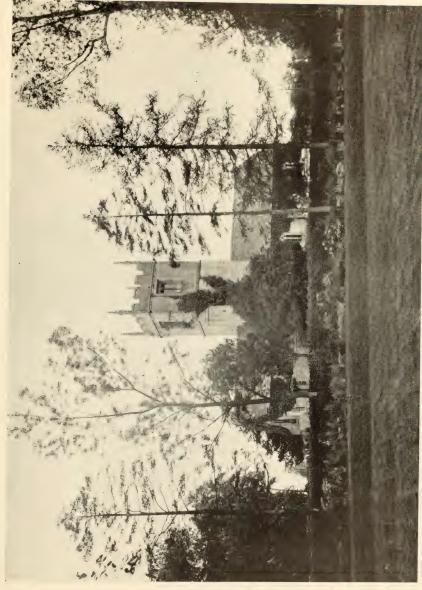
. Z . '

PLATE 51



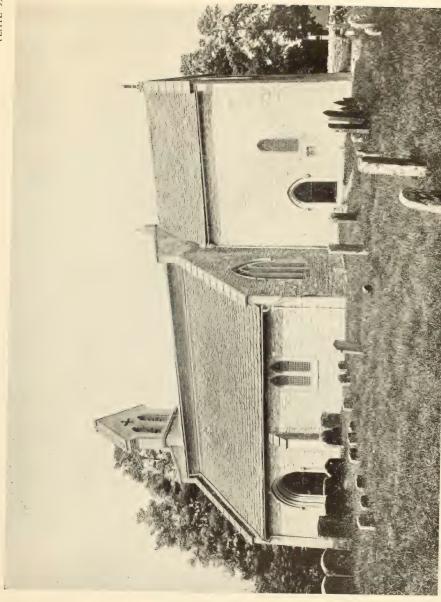
GREAT ROLLRIGHT, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 52



HAMPTON, WORCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 53



HAMPTON POYLE, OXFORDSHIRE

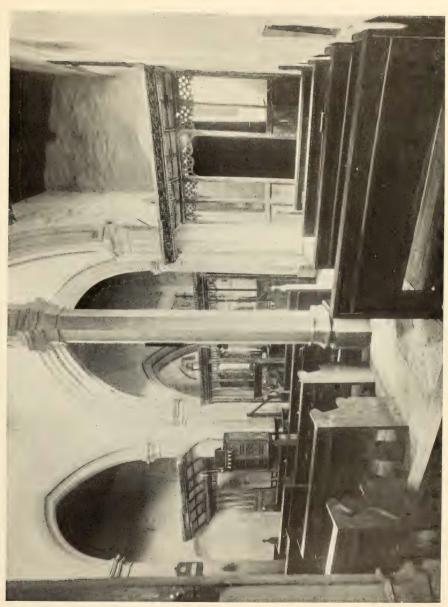


PLATE 55 1 1 3

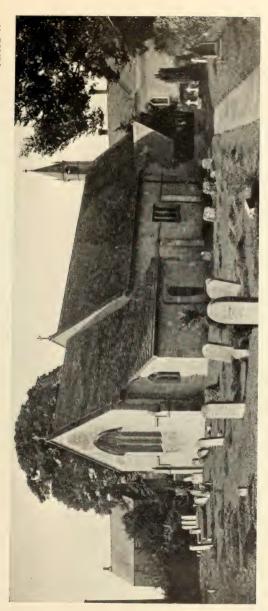
THE ENGLISH VILLAGE CHURCH

HEADINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 56



HOOK NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE

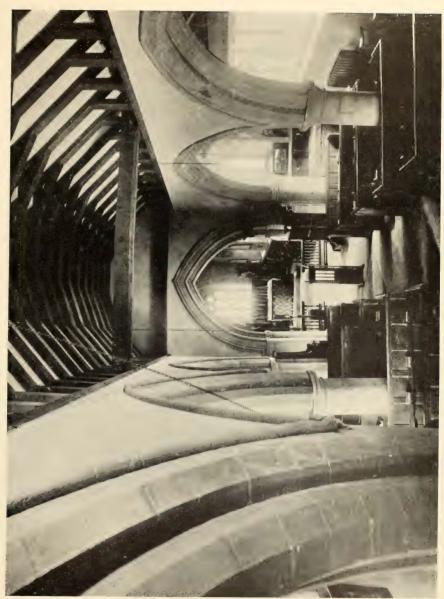


QUENNINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

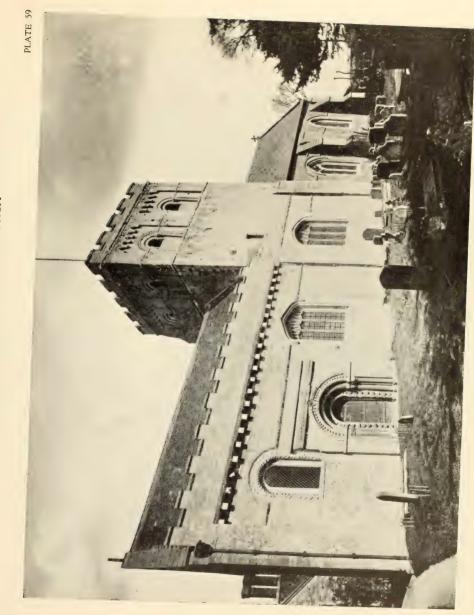


ICKFORD, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

PLATE 58

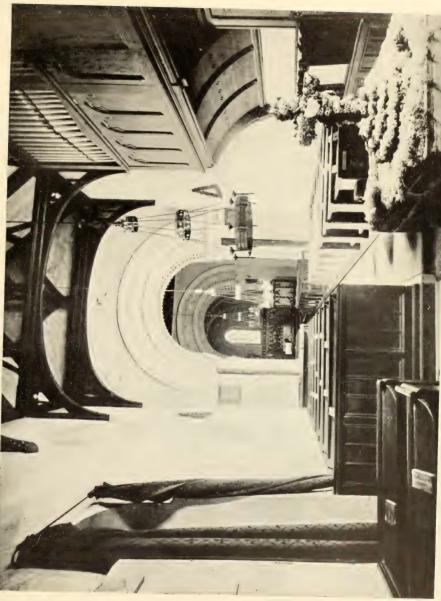


ICKFORD, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

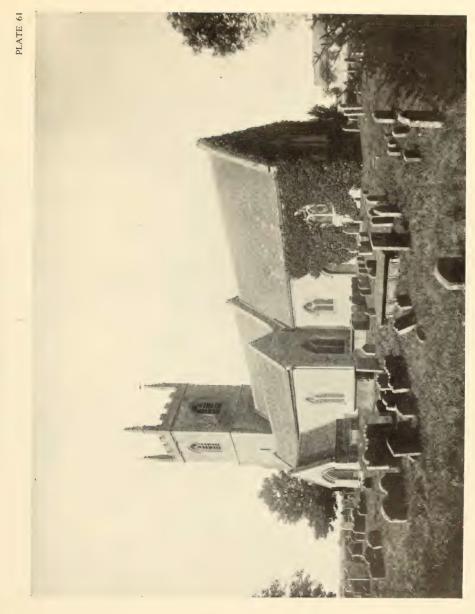


IFFLEY, OXFORDSHIRE

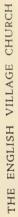
PLATE 60



IFFLEY, OXFORDSHIRE



ISLIP, OXFORDSHIRE



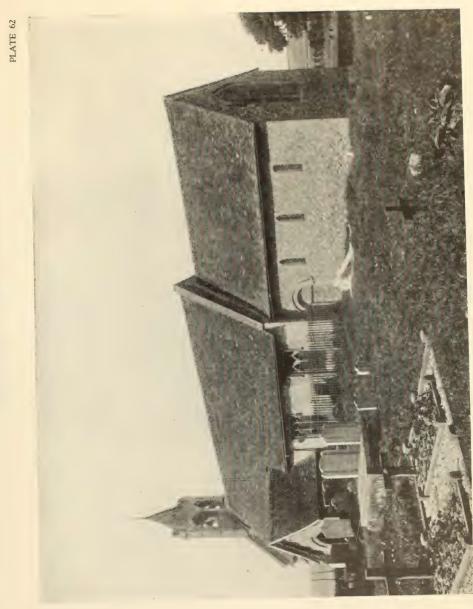
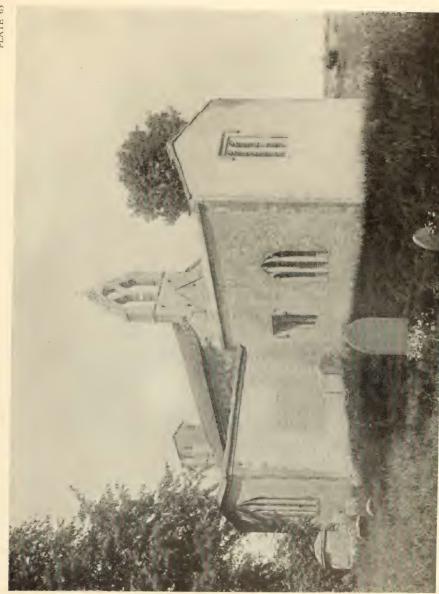


PLATE 63



KELMSCOT, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 64



KELMSCOT, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 65

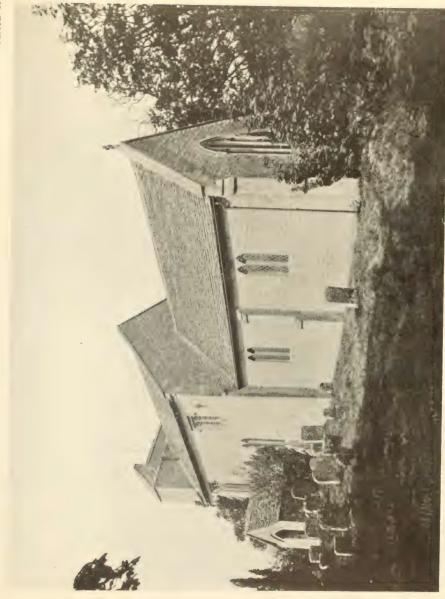
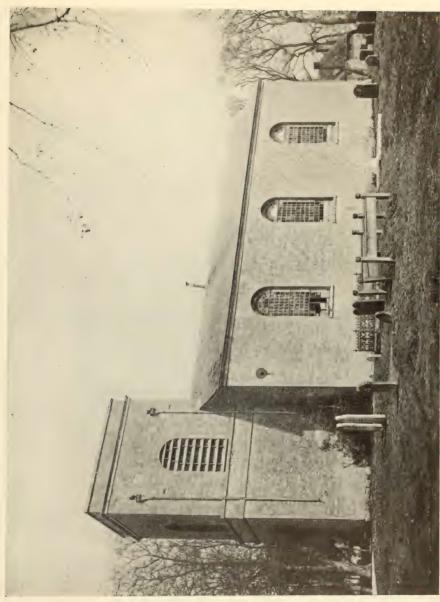


PLATE 66



KIDLINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 67



KINGSEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

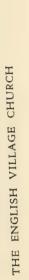
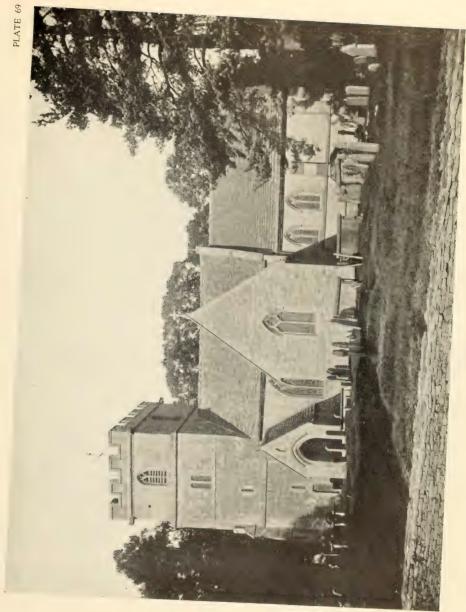


PLATE 68



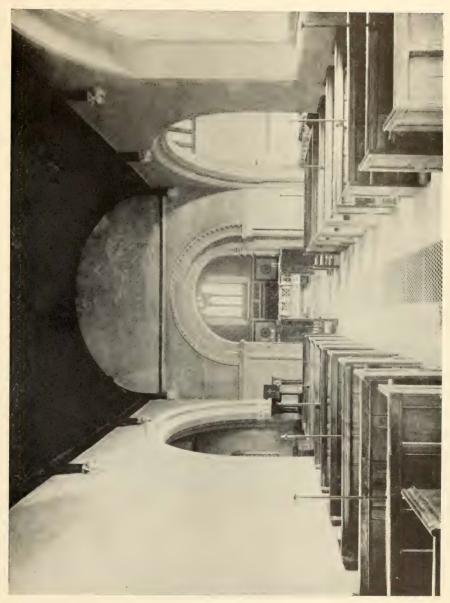
LANGFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

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LATTON, WILTSHIRE

PLATE 70



LATTON, WILTSHIRE

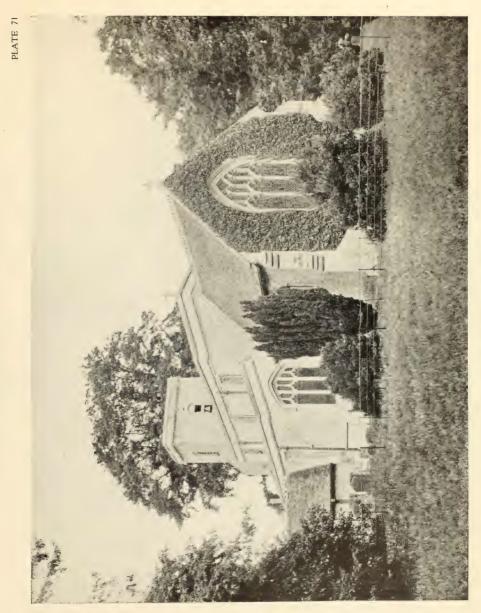
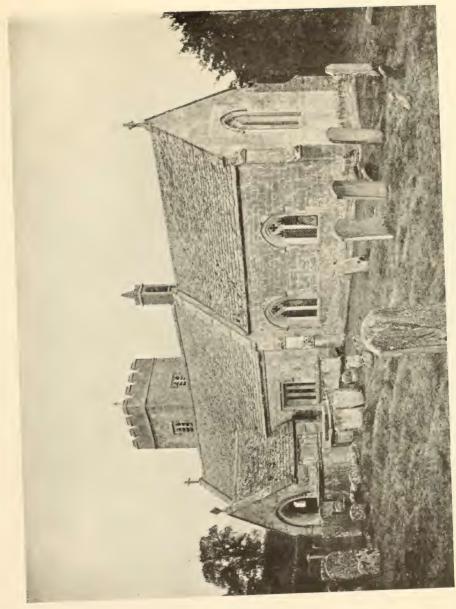




PLATE 72



LITTLE BARRINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 73



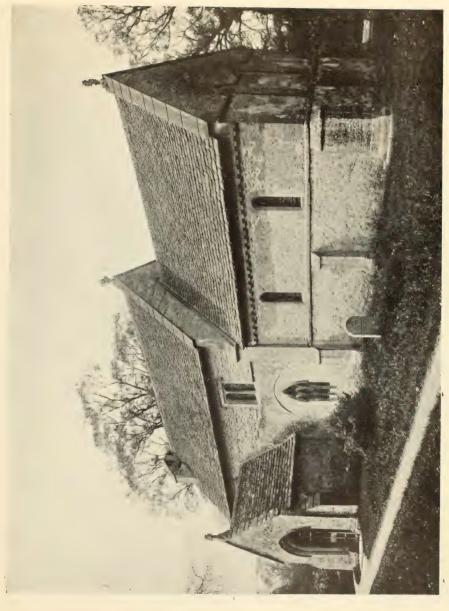
LITTLE BARRINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 74



LITTLE COXWELL, BERKSHIRE

PLATE 75

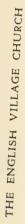


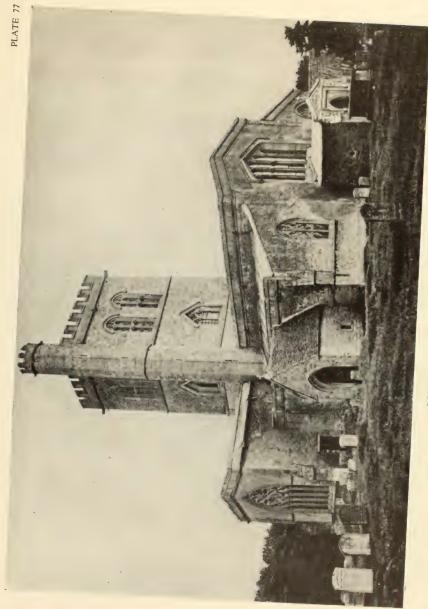
LITTLE FARINGDON. OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 76



LITTLE RISSINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

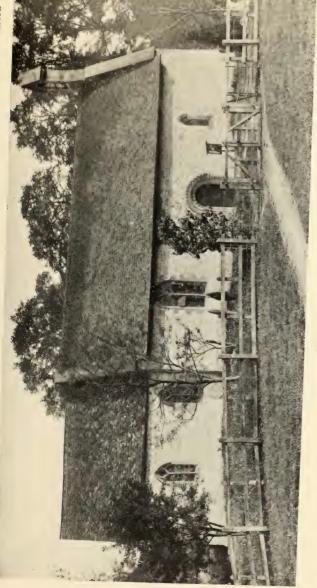




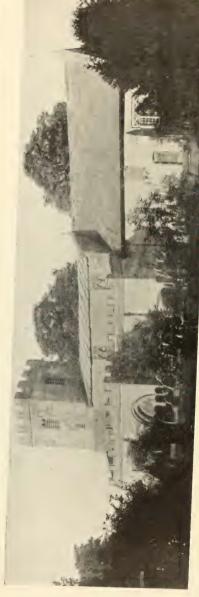
LONG CRENDON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

THE ENGLISH VILLAGE CILONCIA

PLATE 78



WOOLSTONE, BERKSHIRE

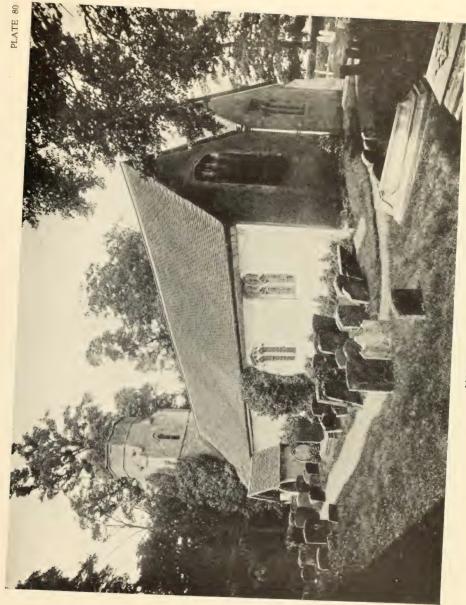


LONGWORTH, BERKSHIRE

PLATE 79



LONGWORTH, BERKSHIRE



MARSH BALDON, OXFORDSHIRE

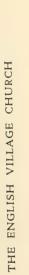
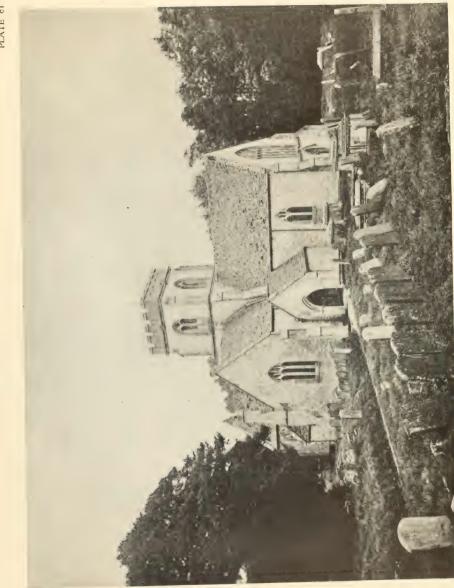


PLATE 81



MINSTER LOVELL, OXFORDSHIRE

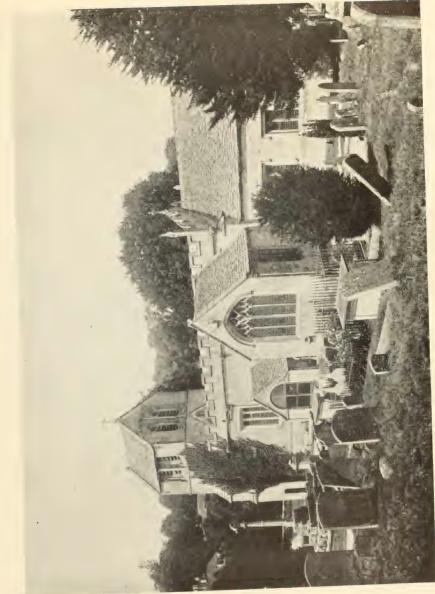
PLATE 82



MONGWELL, OXFORDSHIRE

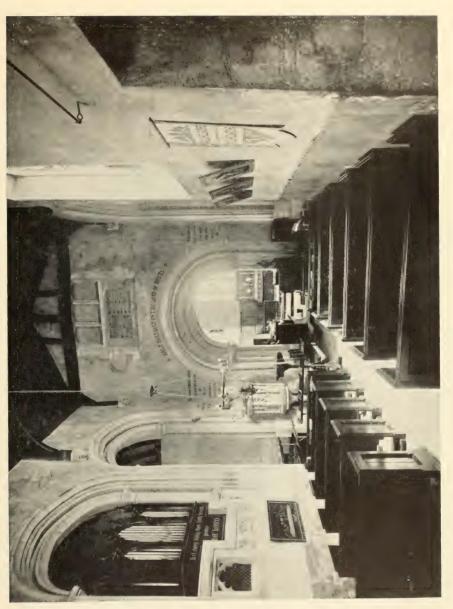


PLATE 83



NORTH CERNEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 84



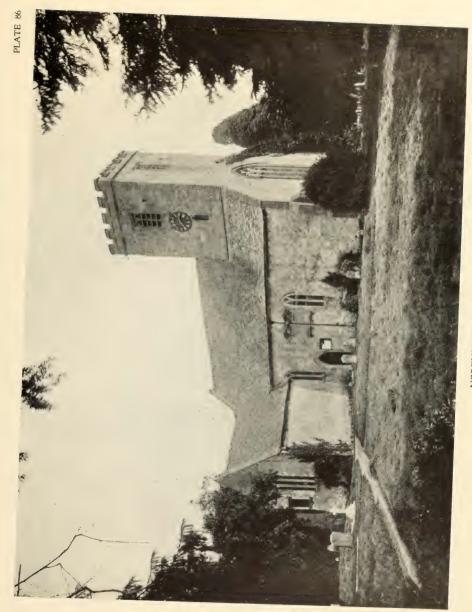
NORTH CERNEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

WANTAGE, BERKSHIRE



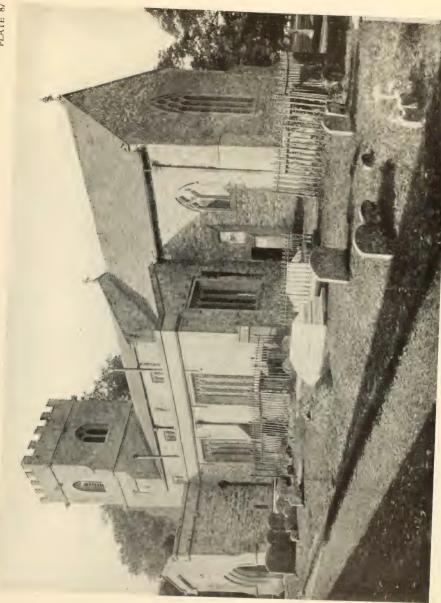
NORTH HINKSEY, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 85



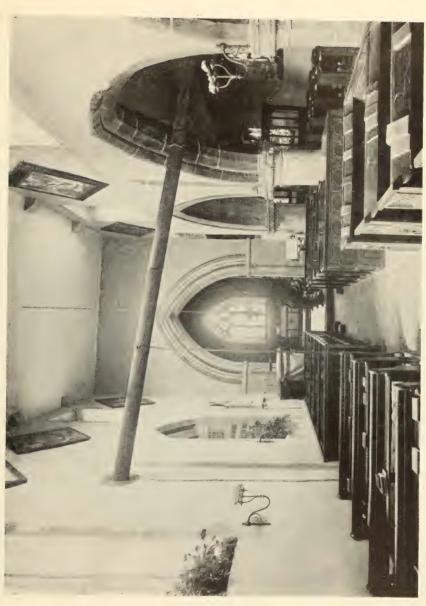
NORTHMOOK, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 87

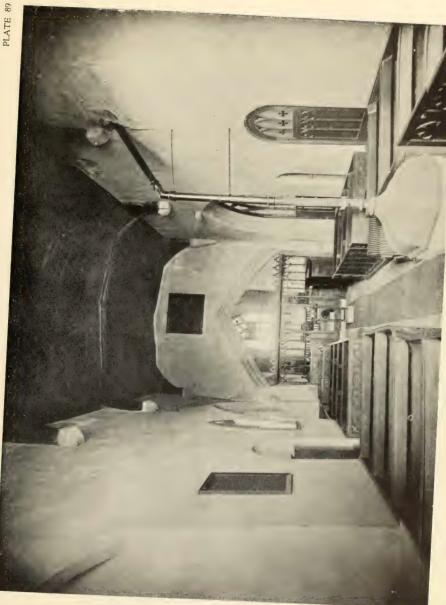


OGBOURNE, WILTSHIRE

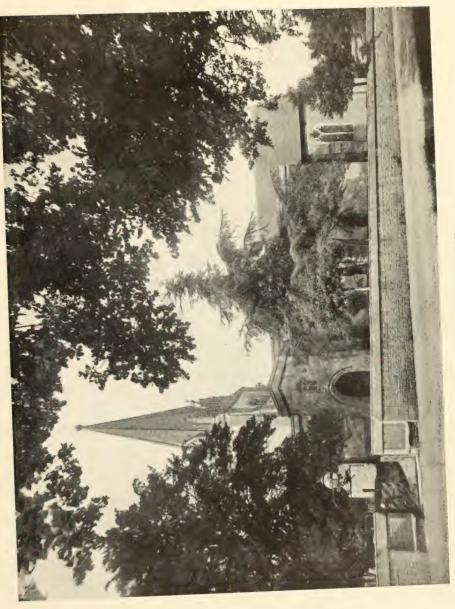
PLATE 88



ROWSHAM, OXFORDSHIRE

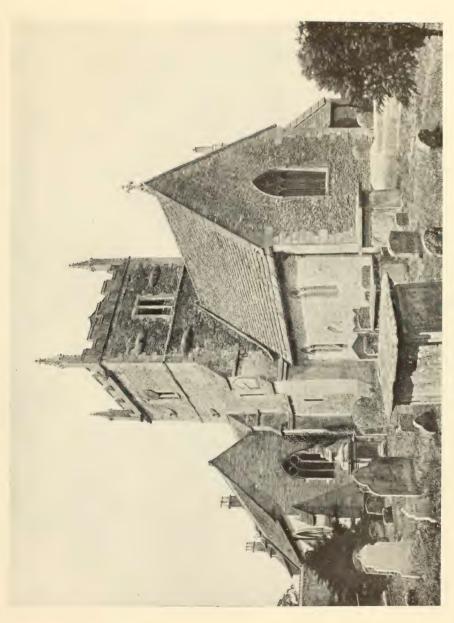


SAINTBURY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

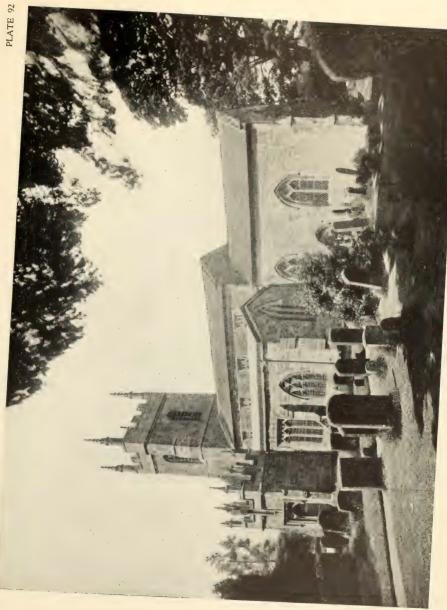


SHIPTON, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 91



SOUTH CERNEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

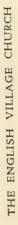


SOUTH NEWINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE

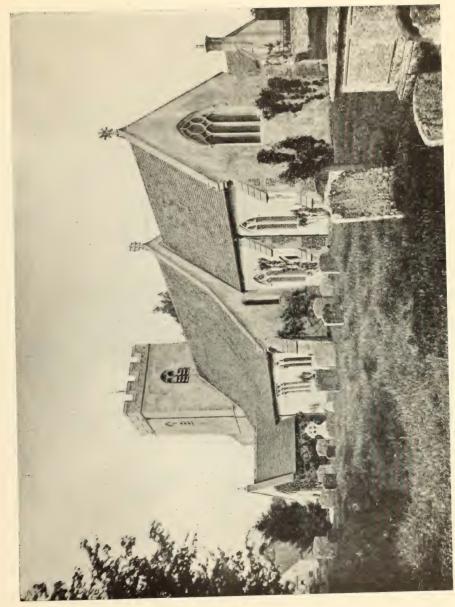
PLATE 93



SOUTHROP, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

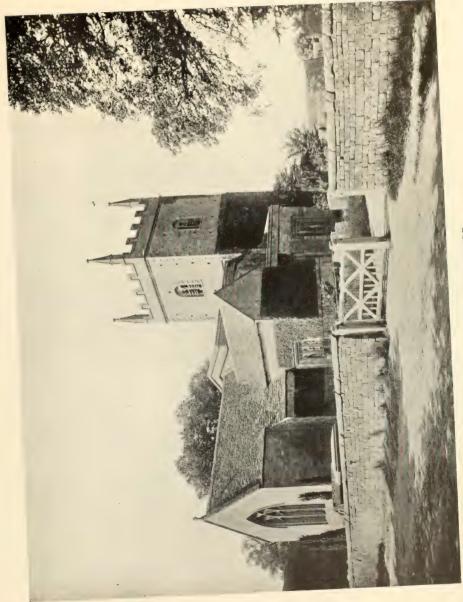




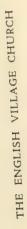


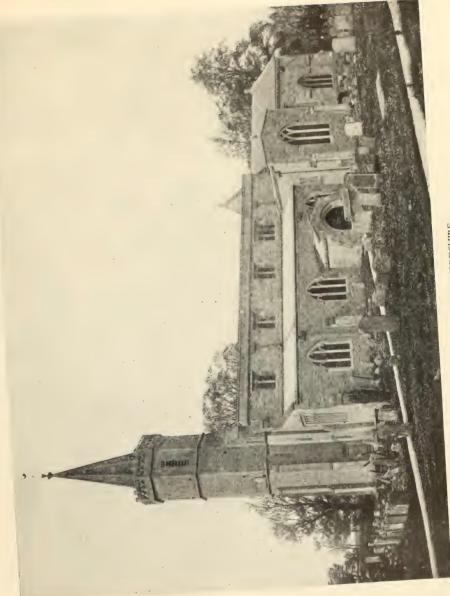
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PLATE 95

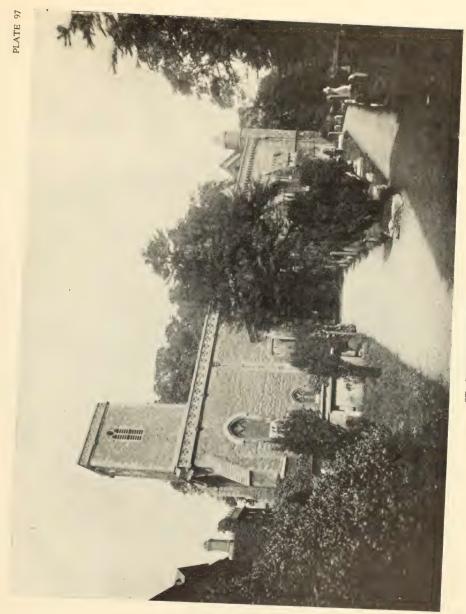


SPELSBURY, OXFORDSHIRE





STANDLAKE, OXFORDSHIRE



ST. PETER'S-IN-THE-EAST OXFORD

PLATE 98



SUNNINGWELL, BERKSHIRE



PLATE 99



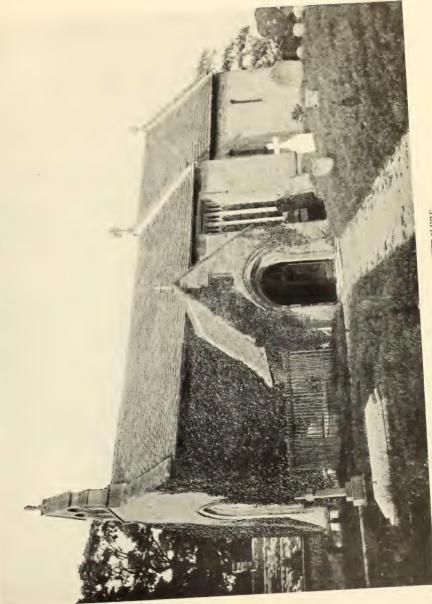
TAYNTON, OXFORDSHIRE

PLATE 100

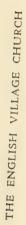


THAME. OXFORDSHIRE





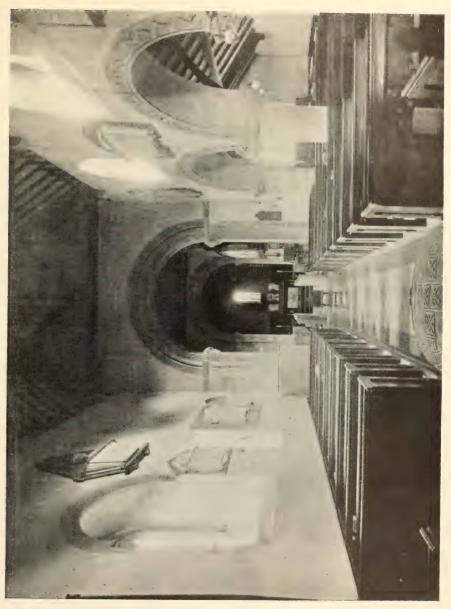
UPPER SWELL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE





UPPER SWELL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 103



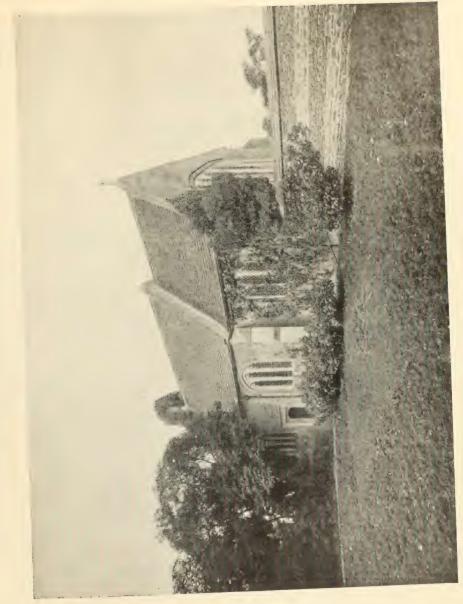
WALLINGFORD, BERKSHIRE

PLATE 104



WARBOROUGH, OXFORDSHIRE



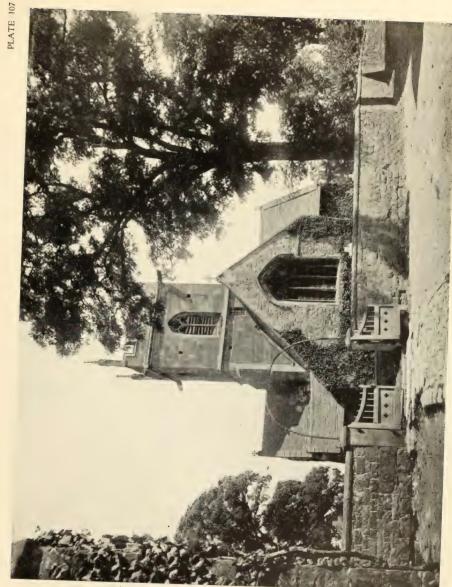


WATER EATON, OXFORDSHIRE





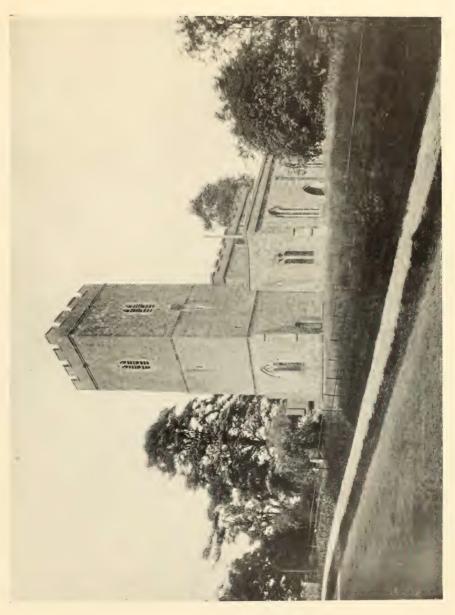
WELFORD.ON.AVON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE



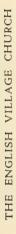
WELLERSEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

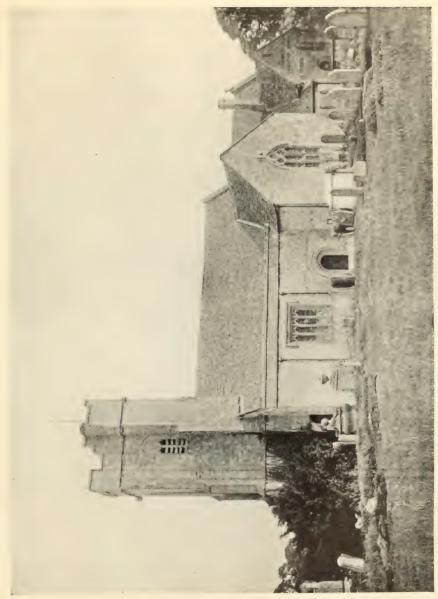
THE ENGLISH VILLAGE CHURCH

PLATE 108



WIGGINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE





WINDRUSH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 110

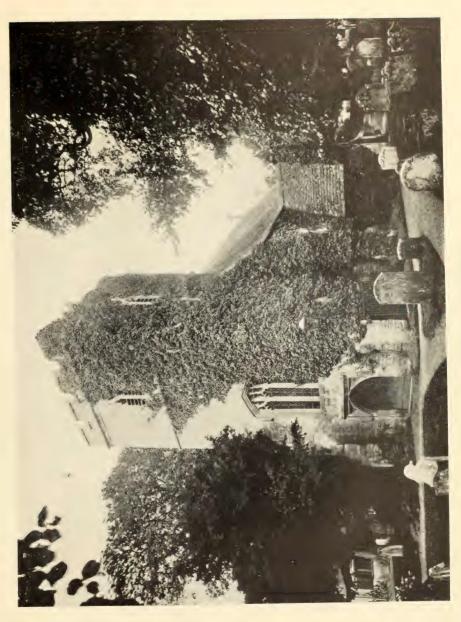


WITHINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

PLATE 111

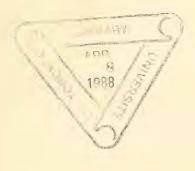


WITHINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

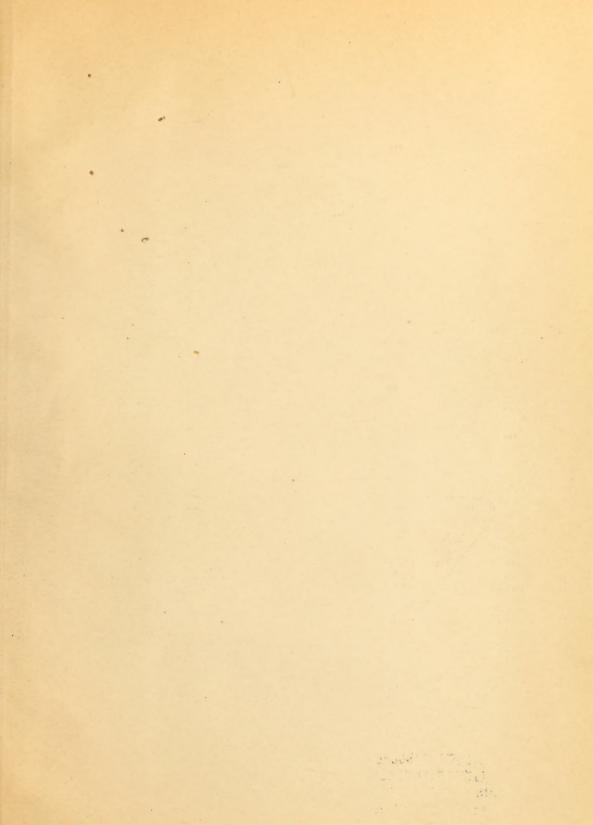


WOLVERCOT, OXFORDSHIRE

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